

ferred casts over the spirit, followed by the delight which arises at an unexpected success. No doubt, when he first planned "Les Rougon Macquart," in 1868, he was still very imperfectly equipped for his selected task; and the fact that he should have attempted it under such circumstances shows that he possessed more than the usual amount of confidence that a young man usually places in his powers. But his experiences during the next four or five years altered everything, for they greatly increased his equipment and rendered the successful prosecution of his task a possibility. Each time he turned to a fresh volume of his series he began by preparing an *&bauche*, or as he generally preferred to say in his letters, a *ma*gwtte*, that is a rough model of the intended work. The Rougon or the Macquart who was to figure most prominently in it had been previously chosen; he knew what was to be that character's environment, and the philosophical idea which was to govern the volume. Taking his pen in hand, he now pictured such secondary characters as the proposed *milieu* suggested, and set down such facts and incidents as might logically ensue from the chosen characters and their surroundings. Briefly, in a broad and somewhat vague way, he built up a subject. Those general notes having been placed in a portfolio by themselves he next took his characters in hand, one by one,

noting their respective histories, ages, health, physical appearance and nature, disposition, habits, and associations.

That work having been completed was placed in a second portfolio, and Zola next passed to the question of environment, collecting a variety of information respecting the different localities where the scenes of his narrative were to be laid. Next he started an inquiry into the professions